

Aurangzaib Yousufzai – June 2017

Thematic Quranic Translation Series Installment 7
(IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE)

Consciousness, Death of Physical Organism,
Torture in Graves and Resurrection

explained in the true light of Quran

PRELUDE

Some questions are answered here in the light of Quranic injunctions which may lead to remove some of the prevalent misunderstood concepts about the themes shown in the title above. These questions were raised during a debate between some Quranist friends some time ago and the writer was asked to answer in the form of a proper article to help future referencing in times of need.

Question:

Aren't the following Verses clearly denying the concepts of Consciousness, Torture in the Graves and the Period of Interval between physical death and eventual Resurrection of Spiritual Self :-

Verses: 2/154-155; 16/20-21; 3/169-170; 22/58; 23/12-16 ???

(Also added here are Verses : 23/16 and 23/100.)

Answer:

You have advanced at least three separate questions to be answered, and those stand like this :-

- 1) Rebuttal of the concept of Consciousness
- 2) Rebuttal of the concept of Torture in the Graves

3) Rebuttal of the Interval between Death & Resurrection

1) CONSCIOUSNESS (2/154-55 & 16/20-21)

You are mistakenly treating the words “Yash’aroon” (يشعرون) or “Tash’aroon” (تشعرون) - used in purely verbal form in the Verses you have referred to - as the noun “Consciousness”. No Sir. This verb in its present context denotes the “act of perceiving or knowing or having some sense thereof”. Look at the Root meanings of this verbal form :-

= **Shiin-Ayn-Ra** = *to know/perceive/understand, to acquaint, perceive by senses: make verses, remark, poetry, poet, verse, art of poetry, feeling, etc.*

On the contrary, the noun “Consciousness” in its academic perspective bears much deeper meanings. So much so that even the LIFE itself is the other name of Consciousness because Consciousness is the essence of all living things. The entire field or science of Psychology deals with Consciousness, viz., man’s Conscious Self.

Here are those Verses, translated in a Rational manner to highlight the verbal use of the word “Sha’ara”:-

Verses 2/154-155:

لا تقولوا لمن يقتل في سبيل الله اموات.. بل احياء ولكن لا تشعرون -- ولنبلونكم بشيء من الخوف والجوع ونقص من الاموال والانفس والثمرات -- وبشر الصابرين -

“And say not of those who are slain in God's cause, "they are dead": nay, they are rather alive in a higher stage which you **perceive not** in your present stage of life. And most certainly shall We continue giving you opportunities for your evolution to higher stages by passing you through fear, and hunger, and loss of worldly goods, of lives and of labor’s fruits. So, do give glad tidings unto those who exercise patience in adversity.”

Verses 16/20-21:

والذين يدعون من دون الله لا يخلقون شيئاً وهم يخلقون - اموات غير احياء - وما يشعرون ايان يبعثون -

“Those beings that some people invoke beside God cannot create anything, since they themselves are but created: they are dead, not living, and they can’t even perceive when they will be raised from the dead!”

As for the concept of Consciousness, we found nowhere in the referred Verses a clear or even distant and ambiguous suggestion leading to denial of this concept. Wherever in these Verses you come across glad tidings of a future New Life, it always means a life of pure Consciousness which is neither a material nor visible form of life. It is because the physical death is imminent, and physical life has no point to return once again as it is governed by the Laws of Nature. And Consciousness is not material or physical and can’t be perceived with naked eye. If the physical form of life returns in the same old stead, in the same physical stage of creation, it can’t be called a new and more evolved life form. At the same time, in the process of nature, almost certainly, no reverse gear can be applied. Time is linear, not circular. So it doesn’t recur or come back. Only a journey towards more and more advancement with a higher form of life than the present, and evolution to higher degrees of Consciousness is envisaged.

Check the 2nd Law of Thermodynamics which proclaims that nature’s processes proceed in only one direction, and can’t be reversed. The entire process of Creation practically confirms the same underlying course of action or purpose. In Quran it is called “Siraatum Mustaqeemun” – a stable, straight and forward looking Path. The next higher, and perhaps the last and the ultimate stage, is the stage of purely conscious or spiritual life which has appropriately been given the name of “the Hereafter” in Quran; and for which preparations continue to be made during the present physical+semi spiritual stage of life. For that phenomenon substantial undeniable and highly manifest signs keep constantly appearing before us.

It is not known how you conceived the idea of rebuttal of Consciousness. From the genesis till our present times whatever has emerged, developed and has appeared before us through the successive acts of creation, always reflects the presence of Consciousness. Its level and its values have been getting higher and higher with the creation of every new stage of life. Eventually, at the human stage of creation, this conscious level has reached its hitherto highest level. It means that it has reached the level of “Self-Consciousness”, which is a level that no creation before us has been blessed with. It means that in every stage of creation, consciousness has

successively been developing from its lower values to higher ones and finally, in the human form of life, it reached the highest stage yet of Self-Consciousness or Self-Awareness. And it is worth mentioning here that “self-awareness” is in reality the stage of awareness by a creation of its Creator.

Those who have some knowledge of Sufis’ lives they also are likely to know the fact that every Sufi seeking to know the Creator immerses himself into the depths of his own inner self. He knows that Creator’s attributes are the great inheritance of a creation and these attributes are transmitted into its inner self before it is created or takes birth. It is worthwhile to mention here that every creator, whoever he might be, is in fact craves for manifesting his own unique qualities and potentialities, and he fulfils this desire through the act of creation.

2) THE THEORY OF TORTURE IN THE GRAVES

There definitely is the rebuttal of the concept of “Torture in the Graves” in Quran, as in the entire length of Quran no mention of it can be found. There’s the mention of physical death, then disposal of the body, and then, at some undetermined point in time, the resurrection of man’s immortal Conscious Self, free from its previous material entity, called the Life of the Hereafter. That is what is usually called the Spiritual Life. In this entire process or system no punitive action of the kind of retribution is conceivable in the graves in view of the obvious reality that many other modes and means, apart from burial, are also practiced, through which human bodies are entrusted back to the nature for a useful disposal.

Here is the most relevant Verse, rationally translated :-

Verse 23/16:

ثُمَّ إِنَّكُمْ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ لَمَيِّتُونَ ﴿١٥﴾ ثُمَّ إِنَّكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ تُبْعَثُونَ ﴿١٦﴾

“And then, behold! after all this, you are destined to die; and then, behold! you shall be raised from the dead on the day the last Stage of creation is established/launched.”

3) THE GRAND INTERVAL CALLED “BARZAKH”

As for the Interval called” Barzakh” in Quran, in the common sense it is that period which accrues between the physical death of the organism where man’s inner conscious self goes to a deep hibernation, and its re-awakening in the form of resurrection in a future higher stage of Life.

This Interval is confirmed by Quranic injunctions, and there’s no authentic justification to reject this concept. No one can know of this Interval as to the length of its duration, whereabouts of the human conscious self and its nature and station of safe custody, or whether it is going to be a total conscious black-out or not. We can only speculate. No flight of thought even at a lightning speed would be able to afford a satisfactory answer in this respect. The more you delve into its intellectual depths, the more complex questions may arise in your minds with almost no tangible explanations. Ultimately a consensus will be reached, which man has already concluded through his knowledge and observations, that living at a lower conscious stage, no creation is capable of acquiring the knowledge and information about a stage much higher in conscious values than its own stage.

It is quite rational too for the reason that in our normal life, no school student can know about the education given in a College, or no college student can know about the higher education given in the universities. It is identical to animals that, being in a lower stage, living with much lower conscious values, cannot comprehend the conditions and values of man’s higher stage of life. On the other hand, man living in the most advanced stage of life or consciousness yet, is destined to know all about the four earlier stages of creation which function with much lower conscious values than what he possesses.

Here is the meaning of Barzakh, or the Interval between now and the upcoming stage of life called Hereafter:-

Ba-Ra-Zay-Kha = a thing that intervenes between two things, a bar/obstruction that makes a separation, the interval between the present and that which is to come, from the period of the death to the resurrection, what is between doubt and certainty.

barzakh n.m. 23:100, 25:53, 55:20

The most relevant Verse is translated hereunder :-

Verse 23/100:

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَ أَحَدَهُمُ الْمَوْتُ قَالَ رَبِّ ارْجِعُونِ ﴿٩٩﴾ لَعَلِّي أَعْمَلُ صَالِحًا فِيمَا تَرَكْتُ ۚ كَلَّا ۚ إِنَّهَا كَلِمَةٌ هُوَ قَائِلُهَا ۚ يَوْمَ يُبْعَثُونَ يُرْزَخُ إِلَىٰ وَمِنْ وَرَائِهِمُ ﴿١٠٠﴾

“....until, when death approaches any of them, he prays: “O my Sustainer! Let me return, let me return [to life], so that I might act righteously in whatever I have failed !” Nay, it is indeed but a meaningless word that he utters: for behind those who leave the world **there is a barrier** until the Day when all will be raised from the dead!”

Here is a rational translation of the rest of the Verses you have referred to, hoping to clear the puzzles in a satisfactory manner. By the way, what these Verses are trying to prove in a clear way is the certain existence of an upcoming higher stage of life – the promised existence of a Hereafter.

Verses 3/169-170:

ولا تحسبن الذين قتلوا في سبيل الله امواتاً۔ بل احياء عند ربهم يرزقون۔۔۔

“But do not think of those that have been slain in God's cause as dead. Nay, they are alive! With their Sustainer they are provided with their means of sustenance/evolution...”

Verses 22/58-59:

والذين هاجروا في سبيل الله ثم قتلوا او ماتوا ليرزقنهم الله رزقاً حسناً۔ وان الله لهو خير الرازقين۔۔ ليدخلنهم مدخلا يرضونه۔ وان الله لعليم حليم،۔۔۔

“AND as for those who forsook the domain of evil in God's cause, and then were slain or died - God will most certainly provide for them beautiful means of evolution for, verily, God - He alone - is the best of providers; [and] He will most certainly cause them to enter upon a state of being that shall please them well: for, verily, God is all-knowing, most forbearing.”

Verses 23/12-16:

ولقد خلقنا الانسان من سلاله من طين۔۔ ثم جعلناه نطفه في قرار مكين۔ ثم خلقنا النطفه علقه، فخلقنا العلقه مضغه، فخلقنا المضغه عظاماً، فكسونا العظام لحماً، ثم

انشاناه خلقاً آخر - فتبارك الله احسن الخالقين - ثم انكم بعد ذلك لميتون - ثم انكم
يوم القيامة تبعثون -

“NOW, INDEED, We have created man out of the essential ingredients of clay, and subsequently caused him to remain as a drop of sperm in firm keeping, and then We created out of the drop of sperm a germ-cell, and then We created out of the germ-cell an embryonic lump, and then We created within the embryonic lump bones, and then We clothed the bones with flesh - and then at this point of completion of physical organism, We turned him into a new, different and higher kind of creation: hallowed, therefore, is God, the best of artisans! And then, behold! after all this, you are destined to die; and then, behold! you shall be raised from the dead when the last stage of creative plan is established (يوم القيامة).”

Here, like some other places in Quran too, the process of human birth is detailed step by step. It can be expressed in many ways adhering with the divine wording and the latest discoveries in medical and anatomical sciences.

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Important words translated:-

Rizq (رزق): All resources and grants leading to man's evolution and sustenance. This sustenance is material as well intellectual and educational; particularly bestowed by God.

Fi Sabeel-il-laah (فى سبيل الله): The way God's plans and purposes are served; in the service of Divine cause; any act or process leading to that path.

Khalqan Aakhir (خلق آخر): A different kind of creation, different and higher from the physical or animal organism being discussed.

Youm al-Qiyamah (يوم القيامة): That promised era or point in time when a pre-planned creative stage is established/launched, which is higher in conscious level from the current stage of life.